

HOME ECONOMICS

GUIDE



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Men's Wear

GARMENT FIT, QUALITY AND CARE

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Physical comfort in clothing continues to be a high priority for men. Whether in a business suit or casual jeans, the way clothes fit affects how the man projects himself. Researchers have found men rated comfort and fit to be the most important factors in wear studies and preference evaluations. The comfort ratings were found to be dependent on the fit of the garment. Even in the most casual clothing, fit is critical to appearance and comfort.

A man's presence, not his clothes, should command attention. Clothes that are low-keyed, fit well and tastefully coordinated create a restful effect—one only notices the result, not the cause. In this guide we will examine how to create the desired effect by shopping realistically, establishing guidelines for good fit in suits and shirts, recognizing quality features and maintaining one's clothes through recommended care practices. "Men's Wear—Body Proportion and Wardrobe Coordination" GH 711 is a companion guide that tells how to coordinate clothes based on personal body proportions.

Men have many excuses for not trying to project a better image - from "I hate to shop" to "I really can't afford to buy good clothes" or "I couldn't care less what I look like." The truth is that well-coordinated clothes do make a difference and clothes are expensive. You can't afford to make many mistakes.

Realistic Shopping Approaches

- **Planning is the key to good wardrobe management.** Refresh your memory, look in your clothes closet and note what clothes are there. What clothes are no longer being worn? If they are just occupying space, it's time to discard them. Make a written or mental list of clothes you do have and can wear. Think how new garments can fit into your existing wardrobe. Buy new clothes in outfits. For example, when buying a suit or jacket and pants, select at least two coordinating shirts and ties. If possible purchase a belt, socks and shoes to round out the wardrobe. Think about total cost before

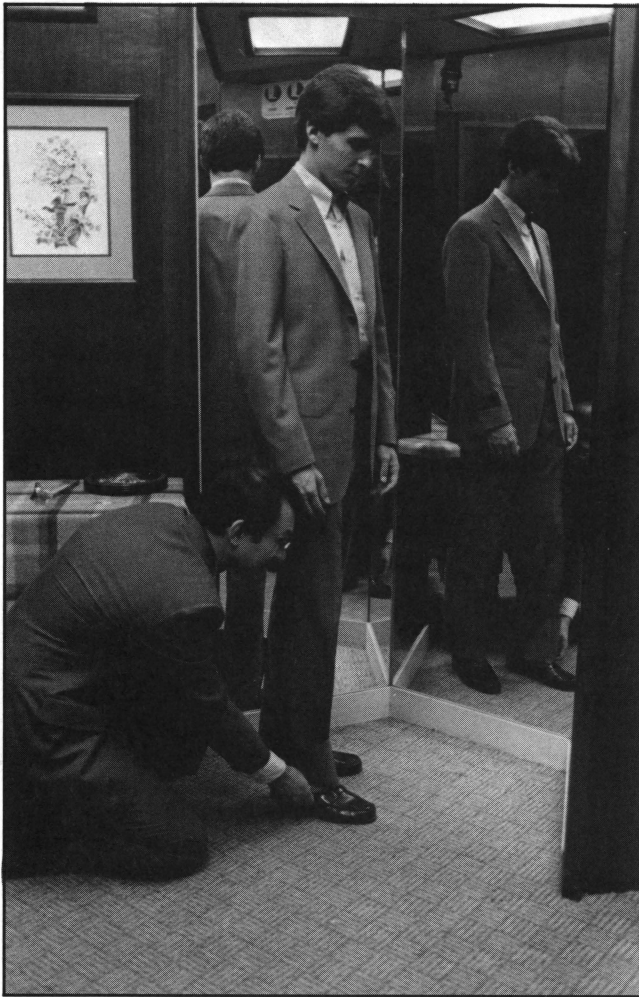


Select a reliable and competent men's wear retailer.

starting on the shopping trip; decide what you need and can afford before buying anything.

- **Plan the shopping trip so there is sufficient time to consider alternatives** and possibly to be fit for alterations. Comparison shopping takes time but can save money. It depends on your priorities. Which do you have the most - time or money?

Dress in your best outfit and wear those accessories you would normally wear with a new suit. Not only will you receive better service, but also you'll get better fit in a



A proper fit is critical to a good appearance in tailored clothes.

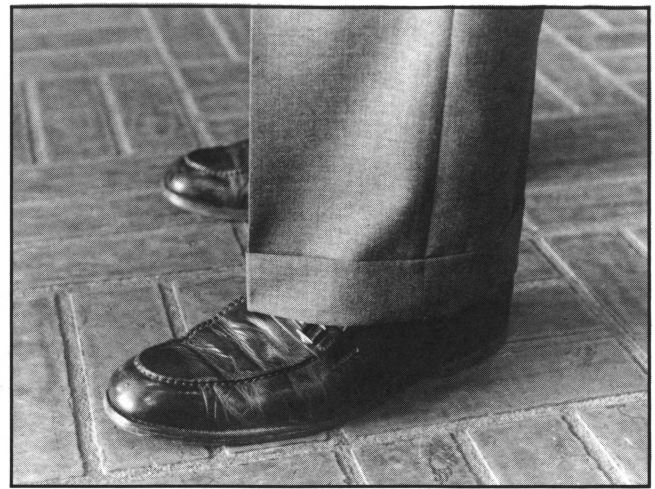
new garment when the appropriate accessories are worn.

- **One way to limit the wardrobe and keep expenses down is to have a *narrow color focus*.** If you have suits that require only brown accessories you may want to select a lighter or darker brown or introduce a brown texture rather than select blue or gray which would call for black accessories. By staying with a narrow color focus, new shirts and ties that are purchased will undoubtedly coordinate with the existing wardrobe.

- ***Make a few major clothing purchases each year.*** Radical changes usually don't occur in men's fashions. Lapels, collars, ties reach their extreme width and start narrowing slowly. If a few purchases are made yearly, there is less strain on the budget and the wardrobe is never totally out-of-date.

- ***Clothes that are constantly worn yield the greatest dollar value.*** A small workable wardrobe is much better than a large one with underused or mismatched clothing items. The greatest pitfall is discarding good quality clothes that are no longer fashionable.

- ***Select classic garments*** that are always in style; avoid moderate or extreme fashions. What the style does for the individual is most important.



Cuffed trousers should be parallel with the ground and just touch the top of the shoe.

- ***Non-seasonal fabrics will extend the clothing budget*** tremendously by not requiring new garments for every season. Lighter-weight wool and polyester blends or texturized polyester provides excellent year-round suits. A good quality suit of year-round fabric will cost less than two suits of poorer quality fabrics.

- ***Think plain when planning a suit or sports jacket purchase.*** Plain jackets can be effectively coordinated with patterned shirts and ties. Buying patterned jackets means buying plain shirts and ties. If you select a plain jacket you have the chance to mix and match with unending possibilities. Plain shirts and ties provide much less variation.

- ***Select a reliable and competent men's wear retailer.*** More competent tailors and fitters are found at better quality stores which provides the consumer with better fit and service. Specialty stores offer a larger variety of merchandise than department stores. This offers greater price and quality range as well as potential for shirt and tie coordination. Generally, the sales personnel at men's specialty shops are better informed and more knowledgeable than other retail personnel.

- ***Shop sales only if you are familiar with the merchandise,*** can purchase classic items at reduced prices, and can have the same service. More merchandise is sold at sale price today than in the past. This is due to more fashion items in men's wear and the economic conditions of the marketplace. Beware of impulse buying at sales. Unfortunately, consumers think and plan more clearly at full price than half price.

Good Fit Is Critical

Those who know and appreciate a good appearance realize the importance of good fit. Fit is very important in tailored clothing where there is generally less variation in color, line and pattern. If the fit is poor, the effect is lost.

Any change in body size will create a need for changed clothing size. If a man gains twenty pounds, it not only hurts his ego but may change his collar size, sleeve length and coat size.

There are two key people in the fitting process—the fitter/tailor and the client. Each has a very important role in the fitting process. The fitter should have the skill to fit the person properly, be willing to put forth the effort to obtain a good fit, and possibly educate the client about what is good fit. The client should be prepared for the fitting process. He should wear appropriate shoes, belt, shirt that he will wear with the new suit. The client should plan sufficient time to get a good fit and plan for a second fitting. The client should understand good fit and see to it that he receives good service.

Individual fitters work differently, but most will start with the trouser fit, add the vest and finally the jacket. Trousers should be checked and fit in these areas.

Waist—should fit slightly above the navel. The waistband should be exactly parallel to the ground and not be too tight nor too loose.

Seat area—should be smooth when standing or seated. If the seat is to be taken in, have it pinned so other areas can be evaluated.

Crotch area—should not be too baggy nor too tight.



The shirt sleeve should be 1/2" longer than the jacket sleeve.

Length of trousers—depends upon the bottom finish. Cuffs or plain finish are traditional, the decision relates more to body proportions than fashion. If you choose cuffs, the depth of the cuffs should be similar to the waistband, should be parallel with the ground and just touch the top of the shoe. Plain finish trousers should touch the top of the shoe in front and be 1/2" to 3/4" longer in the back.

Break—occurs if the trousers are fit correctly above the knee and finished correctly at the hem. It is a slight indentation midway between the knee and ankle.

Vests should be checked as follows:

Fits smoothly buttoned when seated or standing.

Armholes are large enough for comfort but do not gap.

Overlaps the waistband of the trousers.

Has a smooth back free of wrinkles without a tendency to ride up.

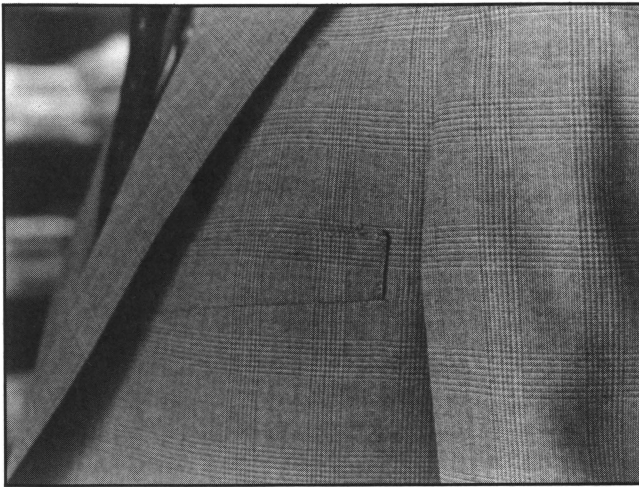
Jackets should be fitted with a vest if they are to be worn together. When considering jacket fit:

The jacket must feel good. The person should be able to move freely in it and not notice any binding.

The collar should fit low and close around the neck,



The lapel should have a slight role and hug the chest.



Quality workmanship is denoted by fabrics that match at key areas: lapels, sleeves, pocket welt and body of the suit.

exposing 1/2" of collar in the back. Should not gap nor fall away from the neck. Many collars do not fit because of posture problems. The entire collar may need to be removed and set deeper into the neckline if there are wrinkles or bulges.

The waist area should be smooth and form a slight indentation when the jacket is buttoned.

The lapel should not gap nor sag.

The length of the jacket is critical. It should cover the seat; the bottom edge should be even and parallel to the floor. The correct length is determined by standing with the arms at the side, curl up the fingers and the bottom of the jacket should fall into that curl.

Jacket sleeve length should be approximately 5 inches from the tip of the thumb. The shirt sleeve should be 1/2 inch longer than the jacket sleeve.

Recognizing Quality

Quality products are a result of quality ingredients and quality workmanship. Traditional men's clothes have been better made than women's because patterns change less radically and less often. The basic formula is:

Garment cost = style + workmanship + serviceability

The ingredients that are used in creating a quality suit include outer fabrics, the interfacings and linings. Essentially, these products have a great deal to do with the serviceability the suit provides. One can have quality workmanship with poor materials and the result is poor product and poor serviceability.

A fabric that looks like or is wool is desirable. Wool is very comfortable to wear and generally maintains its appearance. Polyester and wool blends of comparable quality sell for about as much as wool suits, wrinkle less but many times do not retain the good appearance. A

recent survey (*Money* magazine December 1980) of 200 men who wear suits to work revealed the wear-life of suits and cost on a yearly basis:

<i>Suit Fabric</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Wear-life</i>	<i>Cost Per Year</i>
All-wool	\$216	6.3	\$34.29
Wool-blend	175	4.2	41.67
All-polyester	137	3.6	38.06

There are many variables that are not revealed in the magazine article. Such as, was the workmanship comparable? Was the fabric and interlining similar? Did the consumers use the same transportation to work? It does indicate that the greatest initial cost may last longer and cost less in terms of total service. True cost must be figured on the amount and length of wear the garment provides.

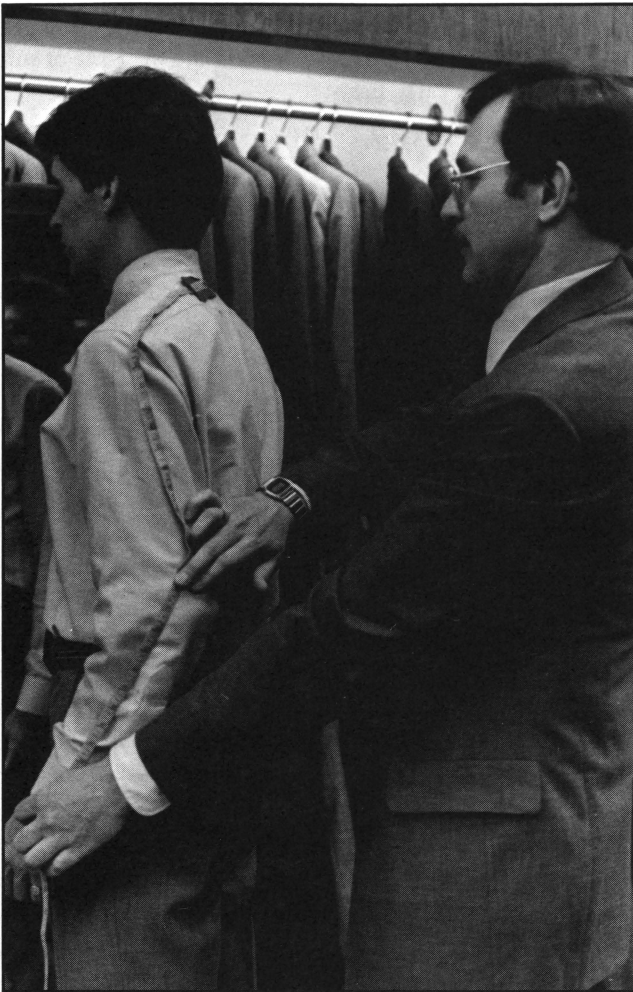
The interior portion of the suit can't be seen but does contribute significantly to the performance of the final product. The handworked canvas interfacings help the garment mold to the body and continue to hold its shape. The critics of fused interfacings claim that it has a more rigid appearance. There have been problems of bubbling and rippling which detract from the desired appearance. A new process, direct stabilization, is being introduced into suit manufacturing. A polymer is applied directly to the suit fabric with heat and pressure to give the fabric support. Manufacturers claim that the process works successfully with different fabric types, weights and textures. Direct stabilization should not interfere with stretch properties of the fabric.

Innovations such as fused interfacings and direct stabilization keep clothing within the reach of the average consumer. Many people can no longer afford the price of a hand-tailored, interfaced suit. These innovative processes improve in time; the fused interfacings have overcome many of the early bubbling problems and now is the major method of interfacing.

Basic construction features are an indication of the quality of workmanship.

- *Fabrics match* at seams, from sleeve to torso, from pocket to jacket, at the lapels and throughout the suit.
- *Undercollar* fabric should blend with the suit fabric.
- *Sleeve* should be sewn smoothly into armhole.
- *Pocket flap* sewn accurately into coat with perfect match and no puckers.
- *Ample overlap* in back vents to provide insurance against gaping if wearer's posterior is ample.

Does a designer's name suit indicate quality? Several authorities say no. The quality of the apparel just has more style. In many cases, the designer has little to do with the designing, manufacturing or selection of the fabric. The



Correct shirt sleeve size can be determined by measuring.

manufacturer pays a fee of seven to ten percent of the wholesale price for the use of the designer's name. This increases the price at retail from \$20-40. Due to the designer's name, many consumers feel the suit has more style and will pay a greater price for it.

The Well-Selected Shirt

Although the majority of dress shirts sold are polyester and cotton blends, the standard look is the all-cotton shirt. The blend shirts are less expensive, wrinkle less and are easier to launder than cotton shirts. Blends are not without drawbacks as they have a tendency to pill around the collar and retain perspiration odors. Cotton shirts absorb more moisture and thus are more comfortable to wear.

The quality of the shirt is determined not only by the type of fiber (cotton, cotton and polyester blend, polyester or nylon) but the fabric and general construction. Fabrics made of fine yarns and firm weave provide long wear. Better shirts are characterized by close, fine stitches from 14 to 18 stitches per inch throughout the garment. Double rows of stitching provide stronger seams in the

body and arms. Buttons are firmly attached and buttonholes are well made.

The shirt collar is the focal point of the well-dressed man. A collar that is too tight will give the impression of a recent weight gain. Check collar sizes before purchasing new shirts. There should be sufficient room to put the finger between the neck and inside collar band. If the finger feels squeezed and collar band looks like it will stretch, consider a larger size.

Usually, there is a choice of collar styles—the button down, regular spread, English spread and pin down. Consider the face shape when selecting a collar style. If the person has a round face, a collar such as an English spread with a horizontal line will emphasize width and not be desirable. Likewise, the length of the collar points vary and if the face is thin, short and wider collar points will be more suitable.

Collars fit vertically as well as horizontally. The vertical fit is referred to as the slope. A person with a longer neck will look best with a collar that fits higher on the neck. A decade ago, one could purchase a low, medium or high slope shirt. Today, these are only available through semi- and custom-tailored shirt manufacturers. For those that do not choose to go the custom route, retailers who carry a full range of merchandise can generally suggest specific shirt manufacturers that provide the appropriate cut. Manufacturers use different patterns for their shirts so the fit will vary among manufacturers.

The collar should have the faint suggestion of a roll. It should not be absolutely stiff and straight from the throat to tip, nor should the ends curl. Removable collar stays help maintain the proper roll.

The second measurement needed for purchasing a shirt is the sleeve. Shirt sleeves are measured from the point midway between the shoulders down to the wrist. The sleeve should come just a fraction below the wristbone and extend $\frac{1}{2}$ " below the jacket sleeve. Quality construction features in the sleeve include single needle construction and buttoned sleeve placket. Single-needle construction is a strong seam due to two rows of stitching in separate operations; one only line of stitching shows on the outside. The buttoned placket is a detail associated with quality shirts.

Inexpensive shirts frequently are cut short in the length. A better shirt has sufficient length so it stays in place during normal activity. A shirt should have no fewer than six buttons down the front including the collar button. Better shirts have seven.

Ties

Neckties are selected for the color, texture and pattern they bring to the ensemble. Coordination is essential for effectiveness. Frequently the birthday tie from Aunt



Jacket shape can be maintained by hanging on a wooden wishbone shaped hanger, unbuttoned.

Matilda will not fit the bill. How the tie holds the knot, the length and width of the tie influences its effectiveness.

Silk is widely used in neckties as the fabric knots well, doesn't slip during wear and sheds wrinkles readily. Finely woven wool fabric makes excellent tie fabrics for many of the same reasons as silks. Too much bulk is the limiting factor for wools. Due to price, polyester is the largest-selling tie fabric. While it is more durable and cleans better, it generally does not hold a knot as well. Rayon and acetate fabrics are very inexpensive but poor tie fabrics because of a tendency to wrinkle and slip, and poor durability and cleanability. If one needs a tie for just a few wearings, only then should rayon or acetate ties be considered.

A tastefully coordinated tie will make the best impression if it is an appropriate length, coordinating width and well tied. The tip of the necktie should be even with the top of the belt buckle. Ties do vary in length—tall men should take a good fitting tie as a guide with them when they shop.

A tab on the back of the large end of the tie will provide a place to slip the small tie end so it isn't visible. The width of the tie should be harmonious with the width of the jacket lapel. For example, wide ties are appropriate for wide lapel jackets.

Clothing Care

Clothes like cars need maintenance. Both will look better and last longer if good care is given. Rotation of clothing and a rest between wearings will help retain their shape. The following suggestions will add miles to clothing wear life.

- Empty the pockets before hanging as the contents tend to distort the garment shape.
- Hang the jacket, unbuttoned on a wooden wishbone hanger. Wire hangers do not properly support the jacket shape. Trousers are best hung by the cuffs to restore the crease and avoid horizontal creases.
- If the suit is damp from rain or perspiration hang it so that it can breathe while drying. Airing helps to reduce the number of dry cleanings.
- Periodically, brush the suit to remove dust and hair. Pressing can restore a wrinkled suit, but don't press a stained suit. Frequently, heat makes stains more permanent.
- The frequency of dry cleaning depends upon the nature of work, season and frequency of wearing. The general rule of thumb is to clean a suit after eight wearings—but that varies with the individual.
- Clothes should be cleaned before they are stored for the season. Soil attracts moths. Moths will eat polyester and wool suits as well as all wool. When sending the clothes to be cleaned request mothproofing for additional insurance.

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Apparel items and models courtesy of Puckett's Men's Wear, Columbia, Mo.